



## MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY OF SERVICE

Corporation for  
**NATIONAL &  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE** ★★ ★

# Host a Stand Down Event for Homeless Veterans

According to a count on a January night in 2011, there were 67,495 homeless Veterans. And an estimated 144,842 Veterans spent at least one night in an emergency shelter or transitional housing program in a recent year. Stand Downs seek to address this issue through one- to three-day events providing services to homeless veterans such as food, shelter, clothing, health screenings, Veterans Administration (VA) and Social Security benefits counseling, and referrals to a variety of other necessary services, such as health care, housing, employment, and substance use treatment.

Stand Downs are collaborative events coordinated between local VAs, other government agencies, and community agencies serving the homeless. Below are the five steps you need to take to plan a Stand Down in your community for MLK Day.

### 1. Identify a Location

To plan a Stand Down, get more information about the [Homeless Veterans Initiative](#) and contact your [local homeless veterans' coordinator](#). Also contact local social service agencies that may already be providing some service for people who have served in the military. The veterans' coordinator and social services will be able to let you know what are the most pressing needs facing homeless vets in your community.

### 2. Organize a Team to Plan

Recruit an informed team to help plan and implement the event. Make sure to engage the professionals and volunteers necessary to create a successful event. A successful group effort requires a motivated team that agrees upon clearly defined tasks, sets reachable goals, and acts with inspiration and purpose.

A Step-by-Step manual on how to develop and implement a Stand Down event may be found here:  
<http://www.vvsvd.net/pdf/sdmanual.pdf>

Don't forget to [post your project](#) on our site so that people in your area can join your efforts as volunteers. And, engage community members, local organizations, and businesses in providing financial and/or in-kind support for your event or activities.

### 3. Implement the Service Project/Activities

On the day of your event, in addition to information listed in the manual:

- Make sure project leaders or coordinators are at the site early, ready to greet team members and participants as they arrive.
- Officially welcome everyone and talk about the purpose of the event focusing on topics like: learning from each other, moving towards a brighter future, and serving in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

- Organize volunteers into different work teams. For example, have different people greeting and directing participants, handing out refreshments, responding to questions, or working one-on-one with veterans depending on your event.
- Conduct your event or activities, offering continuous encouragement to all participants.
- Make time for reflection with participants and volunteers. Talk about the parallels and differences between your effort to expand opportunities for veterans to help them successfully transition into housing and the mission of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. that everyone has the opportunity to live up to the purpose and potential of America.

#### **4. Reflect and Assess**

After the project is completed, take some time to assess and reflect on it with your partners. Think about what went well and what could be improved.

- Host an official debrief meeting for team members after the service day.
- Examine the goals you set and consider which you met, exceeded, or didn't quite reach.
- Who did your work impact? What did you accomplish? What were your impressions of the day?
- Ask everyone for their honest assessment of what went well and how to improve for next time.
- Consider what doing this work on MLK Day, in particular, meant to you.
- Make a list and plan for any ongoing follow-up.

#### **5. Share Your Story**

We know you might not like to brag, but please do! You may inspire others to organize an event assisting Veterans once they hear what you accomplished. [Share your service story](#). We're listening and want to know what you did.